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**[Records Reunited: Killhope Bargain Books from 1847/8.](#)**

***Friends of Killhope Newsletter 2013, 81.***

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**DOI link to article:**

<http://www.friendsofkillhope.org/>

**Date deposited:**

12/04/2018

## Records Reunited: Killhope Bargain Books from 1847/8

Tim Barmby

This note discusses some of the practical difficulties encountered in the analysis of lead miners' work in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The focus is on gathering evidence pertaining to the earnings of miners working in the Northern Pennines in this period. There are two main sources of evidence for earnings, the first are the Bargain books, which were used by the companies to record the bargains that groups of miners had agreed on, the second is the financial accounts of the companies. The first of these sources was a working document held on site the second would have been held in the company's main business office most likely in Newcastle for the records we are considering. This how the records often get separated, so in the case of the Killhope records we will consider in this short note, the Weardale Lead company who took the lease of Killhope in 1883 when the Beaumont Blakett concern eventually gave this up. It seems that the bargain books which would have been in use were often left on site and would come into possession of the company taking the lease. This seems to have been what happened in this case.

The author was examining records for the Weardale Lead Company held in the Durham County Record Office (D/WL/3/1/1)<sup>1</sup> which contain details of bargains let during the period 1847/8. Of course bargains would only contain details of the *rate* of pay for various Bingtale and Fathomtale contracts, the actual payout on these contracts are contained in subsequent financial records of the company, but the puzzle here was that since the Weardale Company had only come into existence in the 1880's how did its records contain bargains from almost 40 years prior to this? Clearly the bargains had been made by the previous holders of the lease. The author had been pursuing other research on Lead mining in Allendale in particular, and so had some familiarity with the Beaumont Blakett records, and was able to track down the payments made on some of these bargains

made in the summer of 1848, at the Northumberland Archive at Woodhorn (NRO/672/E/5E/4) so after 130 years these records are reunited!

The records are very interesting as they contain not just the bargain but also note on how the work is progressing over the quarter, (as is well known bargains in the Northern Pennines were made each quarter, and payments made on the bingtale element only annually at this point in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, later it would be every sixth months).

Of the ten bargains I had copied at the Durham Record office I was able to track down the financial details for seven of these. I have chosen one bargain which I think illustrates most of the points of interest.

Figure 1a shows the bargain agreed to by Peter Milburn and his 5 partners on July 12<sup>th</sup> 1847. The work involves both bingtale and fathomtale elements. The rate agreed per bing is 40/- and per fathom 120/-. The bargain is a standard 3 monthly contract as was usual in the Northern Pennines but as already noted the bargain book contains notes on the progress of the work made by Thomas Emerson and Robert Peart who are, presumably the mine agents. Here we see the process of alteration of the rates in action, in the third inspection we see the assessment that to continue driving the wagon level will require 140/-, and this rate is applied at the start of the next bargain. At the end of the bargain a summary of the work is made called a "yard riding"<sup>2</sup> Figure 1b shows the financial records and we see payment for the seven and three quarter fathoms paid at 120/- giving a total of £46/10/0. Figures 2a,b,3a,b and 4a,b give the matched bargains and accounts for the following 3 quarters making up a whole year. Note that 4b gives the yearly settlement of the Bingtale contract

<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Liz Bregazzi for help with access to these records

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to Ian Forbes for advice on this term

**Figure 1b: Payment for Fathomtale element of Peter Milburn's July Bargain.**  
Reproduced with permission of Viscount Allendale (NRO/672/E/5E/4)

name	date	5	2	0	5	2	0
Stillhope							
Joseph Kietzel	Medman	12 <sup>th</sup> 36	5	5			
2 George Burnell	5	16 <sup>th</sup> 36	8	10			
4. Allen Ward	during the wagon trail						
	when I left the head town	5 <sup>th</sup> 36	36				
6 Thomas Graham	during the wagon trail, before						
	in the Red Tail	10 <sup>th</sup> 36	36	5			
6 D.	3 Machine, 1 Horse	5 <sup>th</sup> 36	3				
4 Thomas Milburn	sitting from the wagon trail						
	up in the Red Tail	11 <sup>th</sup> 36	28				
6 Wm Milburn	during the wagon trail, eastward						
	in Rangeover Tenn	7 <sup>th</sup> 36	16	10			
4 Wm. Graham	springing out on the depth end						
	sits in Rangeover, Tenn	10 <sup>th</sup> 36	4				
George Featherston	during the wagon trail, about	25 <sup>th</sup> 36	14	10			
		16 <sup>th</sup> 36	14	10			
<hr/>							
Berkhout, Nor. Lovel							
Emas Embury	Leaving trail	7 <sup>th</sup> 36	9	10			
Joseph Pratt	D.	21 <sup>st</sup> 36	9	15			
6 Thomas Elliott	during the horse wagon trail	10 <sup>th</sup> 36	35				54 5
<hr/>							
Franklin head							
James Waller	during the horse trail	15 <sup>th</sup> 36	17	6			117 6
<hr/>							
Sledgehill							
John Raby	Medman	7 <sup>th</sup> 36	9	15			
John Gardner	D.	7 <sup>th</sup> 36	9	15			
5 Thomas Striggen	Leaving Arrow	27 <sup>th</sup> 36	35	17 6			
Joseph Stephenson	D.	7 <sup>th</sup> 36	9	15			
	Married Howard	5 <sup>th</sup> 36	11	4 5			114 7 5











[illegible]

**Figure 4b: Payment for Bingle and Fathomale elements of Peter Milburn's March 1848 Bargain. Reproduced with permission of Viscount Allendale (NRO/672/E/5E/4)**

Will he see Mine

24 Buragow lot. To drive the waggon level eastward  
eastward, 60 ft 70 ft above and up 100 ft  
to it at here.

24 Driving the waggon level eastward  
Buragow, town in the Great Constance  
have discovered 10 fathoms the forehead  
is very hard to drive requires 140 ft 70 ft  
to 100 ft and up 100 ft.  
Have driven 17 fathoms the view in  
the forehead is 2 feet wide but poor  
the roof has been worked out by the  
"Mell Man" from above, have now only  
10 ft of stump to take requires 90 ft 70-  
fathom and up 100 ft.  
Driving the waggon level eastward at  
the random of the low flats the view  
is 1 foot wide very hard will require  
up 100 fathom and up 100 ft.  
To 10 ft in  
And Mining. Have driven 13 ft 6  
the view in the forehead is 1 foot  
is very hard and has to drive

129.

Buragow, town.

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Figure 4a: Peter Milburn's March 1848 Bargain.  
Reproduced by permission of Durham County Record Office (D/WL/3/1/1)

We know quite a lot about Peter Milburn through Ian Forbes text of "Whar a candel will not burn" published by Killhope Museum and W Drea's piece on School House in the Friends of Killhope Newsletter number 5 1986. Milburn lived at School House, and was one of the first group of miners who started the Park Level Mine in 1853. It is recorded that Peter Milburn died aged 55 in 1879, owing £13 10s to the Beaumonts, but it is clear that in 1847/8 as a younger man he had enjoyed some good earnings, his partnership on the evidence here made gross earnings of £369 3s 4d between 6 men around £61 10s each for the year or £5 per month.

The present author is working on a project to examine the earnings of miners in Allendale in

the 1860's to hopefully build up a more detailed picture of the fortunes of a rather neglected group of workers and show their contribution in supplying some of the raw material for the ongoing industrialisation of the economy. This work is described in a working paper, which I would be happy to share with any who may be interested, and I also would be interested to hear of any similar work or comments on the above.

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(I would like to thank the staff at both the Northumberland Archive at Woodhorn, also at the Durham County Record Office, for all their help, and also Peter Bartlam for his help with the images)

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